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University students' loneliness and future time perspective as the predictors of their life satisfaction levels

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the role of loneliness and future time perspective as the predictors of life satisfaction levels of university students. The research was done with relational screening model. Data were obtained from 706 (386 women, 320 men) volunteer undergraduate university students. In order to collect data, "The Satisfaction with Life Scale", "Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale" and "Future Time Perspective Scale", are applied. Multiple regression technique is used to analyze the collected data. According to the result of the regression analysis levels it was discovered that the students' loneliness levels (social, romantic, and family subscales) are the predictors of their life satisfaction. However, it was concluded that the students' future time perspective (connectedness, value, speed and extension subscales) cannot predict their life satisfaction. Social interactions in the family setting, friend groups and romantic relationship would be a kind of social support for university students. Cross cultural studies would be useful to establish frameworks that can guide future research.

Keywords: Loneliness, future time perspective, life satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

Life satisfaction is defined as positive assessment of the whole life in accordance with the criteria set by the individual as his or her personal living conditions (Veenhoven, 1996). The first concept of life satisfaction within literature can be found in Neugarten, Havighurst and Robin (1961) 's article and has been identified as perceived situation in the result of comparing between what the person wanted and what he or she achieve or accomplish in life or any particular period of time. The results obtained in a perceived life situation of meeting an individual's basic biological needs, societal expectations and benefit from the opportunities offered by community where he or she is living are described as life satisfaction (Fabian, 1990). In addition, the individual's expectation of conceivable situation to achieve the goals which he or she determine in life satisfaction (Aysan and Bozkurt, 2004). In other words, addressing the individual's life as a whole or cognitive evaluation of the satisfaction or absence situation in terms of the variety of habitats such as friends, family, current environment are referred to as life satisfaction (Civitci, 2009). In addition, changes in judgment criteria from person to another with the conscious cognitive judgment of one's life in which the criteria for judgment are made by the person is described as life satisfaction (Pavot and Diener, 1993).

When specific means are attributed to personal experience in predicting what would happen in the future, its effects in the person is received as life satisfaction. Life satisfactions are assessed by considering recent or past close success rather than an assessment of the distant past (Meulemann, 2001). In this context, It is emphasized that variables such as personality characteristics, lifestyle, physical health, age, stress level, social interaction, achievement, reading or listening to music, physical activity, nutrition, natural activities have positive effects on life satisfaction (Chow, 2005; Dockery, 2003). In addition, it has been reported that as the personal tendencies, close relationships and the current culture which we live within has some effects on an individual but the psychological variables have more descriptive role in determining life satisfaction (Myers and Diener, 1995).

From the moment we came into the world we learn to exist with people living within our surrounding and in this case being alone is perceived as a condition that makes people feel negative emotions. There are different approaches and definitions in the literature about loneliness. The common point highlighted in these definitions is that loneliness can result from subjectively perceived situation. However, a situation that will create a feeling of loneliness in someone may not create a feeling of loneliness to another person. For example, a person can feel lonely within his group despite taking an active role in the group (Perry, 1990). Loneliness is defined as a psychological condition created as result of negative perceptions as the result of cannot be found in social relationships that an individual's imagination is associated with the relationships he experienced (Peplau and Perlman, 1982). Moreover, De Jong-Gierveld (1998), depicted loneliness as sensed situation and person perception of himself or herself as inadequate in building relationships and failing to reach the interpersonal relationships which he or she wants.

When assessing loneliness as a one-dimensional factor, the focus is on the subject of intensity in relations and lack of qualifications (Russell, Cutrona, Rose and Yurko, 1984), it has been assessed by Weiss (1987) in two dimensions; emotional and social loneliness. This research has dealt with loneliness in two dimensions and examines the other variables of the study by focusing on the social dimension (social relations) and emotional dimension (family and romantic relationships) of loneliness.

Although social isolation have a significant determinant on life satisfaction, students with low life satisfaction have reported that they experienced higher levels of emotional loneliness and it has been emphasized that in close relationships patterned with family and romantic relationships (emotional loneliness) are more influential on life satisfaction (Cecen, 2007). Amichai-Hamburger and Hayat (2011) expressed that individuals using the internet increased their communication with family, friends and colleagues. Contrary to increasing communication between individuals, using internet could prevent individuals from being lonely and could improve life satisfaction, in a study conducted in

the United States in 2004 and 2005, it has been reported that spending time navigating on the internet is positively correlated with loneliness and it is negatively correlated with life satisfaction (Stepanikova, Nie & He, 2010).

Lens (1988) defines the future time perspective as a relationship between currently done actions and objectives desired to be achieved in near and distant future. Future time perspective consists of reflection on personal psychological perception and awareness, rather than become a time where everyone experience is in his physical live (Husman and Shell, 2008). For example, although as the physical time indicates tomorrow as a close period of time, when the time is announced important decision for some individuals may occur feeling that tomorrow is too remote a time due to the difficulty in the passage of time. For this reason, while individuals create plans for the future, differences exist in everyone's goal as calendrical time zones (Avcı, 2008). The future time perspective of individual is comprised of a combination of result of life satisfaction and personal characteristics (Zhang and Howell, 2011).

It is stated that university students who are not satisfied from issues they encounter, experience a sense of loneliness more than satisfied students and it has also been reported that university students who perceived the occurrence of adverse events in the future feel more loneliness compared with students who perceived the occurrence of positive events (Bıyık, 2004). In addition, the negative experiences which we experienced in the past will adversely affect the future and present moments of an individual as stated by Hoglund and Collison (1989). A significant negative correlation was found between experienced negative experiences in the past and life satisfaction (Ho, Cheung & Cheung, 2008). However, Tuzgol-Dost (2007) expressed that life satisfaction of university students who believed in future expectations were found to be high

Thought of that finding derived from the examination of the interaction between life satisfaction, loneliness, and future time perception will contribute to students' personal and social development and career planning reveals the importance of the research. Its findings can also help psychological counselors in providing more effective assistance.

No literature was found on any research that was intended for perceiving dimensions of a relationship between current actions that are near and distant future objectives which individual wants to achieve and if an individual finds closeness, heartiness and sensuality in the interpersonal relations and of whether these could be predictors of life satisfaction. It is understood that we need to examine the role of loneliness levels and future time perception on the level of life satisfaction.

The main purpose of this research, is to examine how loneliness levels of university students and sub-dimensions of their social, romantic and family relationships, total score of loneliness and sub dimensions of future time perspective connectedness, value, speed and extension affects their level of life satisfaction.

2. Material and Method

This research is a correlational research that has more than one type of quantitative variable. Correlational researches, investigates the relationship between two or more variables without intervention in any manner to these variables and the researches requires data collection in order to determine the degree and relationships existing between these variables (Frankel & Wallen, 2006).

A study group was constituted from 706 (386 women, 320 men) undergraduate students who are continuing their program at the Gaziosman Pasa University in 2013-2014 academic year. Having studied the distribution of students who participated in the research by faculty type; Faculty of Education (N = 257), 36.4% of the sample, Faculty of Arts and Sciences (N = 198), 28.0% of the sample, Faculty of Agriculture (N = 92), 13.0% of the sample and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (N = 159), 22.5% of the sample.

Data collection was carried out by analyzing the responses to questionnaires used in the research a pack of four measuring tools was used. The first one was developed by the researcher to collect socio-demographic data 'Personal Information Form'. Second measurement tool was "Future Time Perspective Scale" which was adapted in Turkish language by Avcı (2008) to measure students' perceptions of the future. The third measurement tool was "Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale" (SELSA-S) which was adapted to Turkish language by CeCen (2007) to measure the loneliness levels of students. The fourth measurement tool used was "The Satisfaction with Life Scale" which was adapted to Turkish by Yetim (1991) to measure students' life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction Scale, developed by Diener et al (1985) to measure life satisfaction of individuals, Turkish adaptation made by Yetim (1991). Higher scores obtained from the scale shows that high life satisfaction. Yetim (1991), coefficient of the test and test retest reliability were found to be .86 and .73 respectively.

Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale: Scale developed by DiTommaso, Brannen and Best (2004) and its Turkish adaptation made by Cecen (2007). The scale consists of 15 items and three dimensions. When social loneliness, loneliness in social relationships measuring with subscales; emotional loneliness, the loneliness in family and romantic relationships are measured by subscales. High scores taken from the scale shows high levels of loneliness. Cronbach's alpha values in the original form of the scale of reliability in study were found to be .90 for the subscales of social relations; .89 for the subscales of family relationships and .87 for romantic relationships subscale.

Future Time Perspective Scale: Future time perspective of university students, was measured by Future Time Perspective Scale which consisting of 27 items and developed by Husman and Shell (1996). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was made by Avcı (2008). The scale consists of four subscales. These connectedness, value, speed and extension subscale. It has reached to that point of the scale by collection scores of items in the subscale and divided into number of items. Increase in the score of the subscales of future time perspective, indicate an increase in the presence of property which measured by the lower scale in the individual. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in the original scale's reliability study: .78 for future time perspective scale; .82 for connectedness subscale; .72 for value subscale; .72 for the speed subscale; .74 for the extension subscale (Husman and Shell 1996).

2.1. Procedure

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine what degree of predictors of the scores of loneliness levels of university students and sub-dimensions of their (social, romantic and family relationships) and sub dimensions of future time perspective (connectedness, value, speed and extension) on their life satisfaction. To test assumptions of multiple regression analysis, the value of losses related to the data set of the research group whether it, normality, linearity and homogeneity assumptions are examined and it was found to meet the assumptions.

2.2. Statistical Analysis

Multivariate statistical techniques including Structural Equation Modeling are based on some assumptions and reliability of statistical tests obtained by related techniques depend on procuring of these assumptions (Kalaycı, 2009). When the data is examined, it is found that missing data is coincidental and there is no assignment. After that, one-way and multiple extreme value analysis was made. It is seen that the values are in desired range. Then, coefficient of skewness and flatness coefficients were examined for one variable normality, it is found that values are in between ± 1.0 and data set provides one-variable normality. It is investigated by using graphics whether variables meet linearity and multiple normality assumptions and it is found that the assumption is met. In multiple variable analysis made by structural equation model, sample size should be between 200 and 500 people. The closer this value to 500, the better the reliability of the model (Kline; 2005). In the light of that information, size of data set is found to be appropriate for analysis.

3. Result

In this research the predicted variable is life satisfaction and the predictive variables are loneliness and future perspective subscales. According to the defined variables, the results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Model

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	26.47	2.72		9.71	.000**
Speed	.45	.30	.059	1.51	.13
Connectedness	-.03	.47	-.003	-.07	.93
Value	-.57	.37	-.059	-1.55	.12
extension	.25	.42	-.023	.59	.55
social	-.13	.04	-.12	-2.99	.003**
romantic	-.12	.03	-.13	-3.52	.000**
family	-.13	.04	-.12	-3.17	.002**
Total score of loneliness	-.12	.03	-.24	-3.52	.000**
R=.274 R2 = .075 F= (7,694) = 8.02 p = .000**					

When examined simultaneously the role of independent variables in predicting the levels of life satisfaction of university students, it was found that there is no predictor relationship in significant level between future time perception connectedness, value, speed and extension dimension of students who participated in the research and life satisfaction levels and there are significant level of negative predictive relationship between loneliness levels of university students who participated in the research and sub-dimensions of their social, romantic and family relationships, total score of loneliness and their levels of life satisfaction ($r = .274$, $r^2 = .075$, $p < .01$). According to the standardized regression coefficient (β) in order of importance the variables predictor of life satisfaction level of students was ranked first loneliness total points (-.247), second level of loneliness was romantic relationships dimension (-.133), third row was level of loneliness dimension of family relationships (-.125) and ranked fourth is the level of loneliness social relations dimension (-.120) are understood to take place. The sum of the independent variables; subscales of future time perception connectedness, value, speed and extension, loneliness levels of social, romantic and family relationships dimensions and total score of loneliness together with the university students life satisfaction levels is understood that explains 7.5% level ($r^2 = .075$) of variance.

4. Discussion

It was observed that significant differences in the negative direction between life satisfaction of university students and loneliness levels social, romantic and family relationship dimension, total scores of loneliness and it has been determined differ significantly in the positive direction between it and speed dimension of future time perception. However it was observed that no significant relationship level exists between life satisfaction and future time perception allegiance, value, speed and extension dimensions.

It is consistent with other findings that there is a relationship significantly in the negative direction between life satisfaction and the level of loneliness social relations dimension. A romantic relationship established by an individual with the opposite sex, will prevent him or her feel unhappy and perceive of himself or herself as being lonely. In other words, it appears to be a relationship in a positive direction between the existence of a romantic relationship and life satisfaction and the negative correlation with loneliness. This situation is consistent with the finding that there is a significant relationship in the negative direction between life satisfaction and the level of loneliness

romantic relations dimension. The quality of sharing and communication within the family affect our enjoyment of life. It can be said that there is a positive relationship between the quality of communication with family members and life satisfaction and negative relationship with loneliness. In this case a negative relationship between life satisfaction and loneliness levels of family dimension is consistent with the finding that there was a significant relationship. In general we reach to concept of loneliness through the combination of loneliness levels, social, romantic and family relationships dimensions. The results discovered that significant negative relationship between life satisfaction and total scores of loneliness of university students, are consistent with the relationship between life satisfaction and loneliness levels, social, romantic and family relationships dimensions.

The perception passes through quickly in the process of achieving our goals in a life time, affects our outlook to life and our happiness levels. When we do what should be done ahead of time and when we left leave things that need to be done for the last moment, time transition speed may occur different perception. As a natural result of this case our life satisfaction is affected. At a meaningful level positive correlation has been found between life satisfaction and speed dimension of future time perception.

The individual bond established between future goals with current actions (loyalty), the period of time where the individual present sacrifice to achieve future goals (value), individual temporally distance to the target within the time frame personally attach meaning (extension) and the transition rate time which person perceives individually in the normal flow process of time (speed); are constitute of future times of individual perception. These perceptions show the effect of the objectives to be achieved in near and distant future on current actions (Lens, 1988). Expectation situation it detects to achieve the goals set by the individual, it determines the life satisfaction (Aysan and Bozkurt, 2004). In addition, as a result of a combination of personal characteristics and life satisfaction it consists of individual future time perspective (Zhang and Howell, 2011). For this reason, life satisfaction and future time perspective can be perceived as predictors of each other. But in this research results has been found that no relationship in a meaningful level between future time perspective commitment, value and extension dimensions and level of life satisfaction. The perception of future time for students cannot be seen as an important condition because of the lack of sufficient target for the future of university students, lack of motivation to achieve these targets and these targets are not associated with them life. For this reason, may be no relationship in a meaningful level between future time perspective commitment, value and extension dimensions and level of life satisfaction.

Loneliness is examined in two dimensions as social loneliness and emotional loneliness (Weiss, 1973, p. 1987). When measuring social loneliness by the social dimensions of loneliness levels used in this study; emotional loneliness is measured by dimensions of romantic and family relationships of loneliness levels used in this study. A study by Cecen (2007b) examining the relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction levels among university students was found a significant negative correlation between emotional loneliness and life satisfaction and there is no significant correlation between life satisfaction and social loneliness. Cecen (2007b)'s report about there is a significant differences in the negative direction between emotional loneliness and life satisfaction are consistent with the results of this research.

Recommendations, and suggestions for researchers for future researches; To increase the students' life satisfaction preparation of a mentoring program including group guidance activity for reducing levels of loneliness and making thereto experimental study it is seen as topic worthy of assessment. However, different variables that predict life satisfaction of students can be viewed in more detail.

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